

Sierra Front Northwest Great Basin

Resource Advisory Council meeting

September 17, 2015

Winnemucca, NV

**Introduction** - Deborah Lassiter, RAC Chairperson.

**Members present:** Willie Molini, Doug Hogan, Greg Hendricks, Craig Young, David Von Seggern, Pat Irwin, Tim Dufferena, Andy Hart, Deborah Lassiter (9).

**BLM representatives present:** Ralph Thomas (CCD DM), Robert Towne (WD DM), Lisa Ross (CCD PAO), and Terah Malsam (WD PAO) (4).

**Minutes** – comments: Pat pointed out that the minutes did not list the members present and suggested the names should be listed before approval.

- Motion passed, minutes approved w/ the addition of the names.

**Reports from Sub groups:**

NCA Sub Group

- Debbie: the group has not met all summer
- Craig: Subgroup has worked on signage, monitoring of watersheds.

Sage Grouse Sub Group – Willie Molini.

- Tools for sage grouse conservation- a workshop
  - WD DM (Gene) suggested doing this in December, after the Sage Grouse ROD was signed

Wild Horse and Burro Sub Group – Greg Hendricks

- Letter – draft in packet.
  - Recommendations
  - WHB workshop – what’s working/not working, numbers of WHB continue to grow.
  - The letter reflects this with recommendations (i.e. Sterilizations – point #2).  
Andy: what has been the holdup in using PZP as a population control method?  
Greg: there are problems with the drug itself. There are two different PZPs.  
PZP is not an answer in its current state, it’s a tool we can use though.  
Willie: Assistance Agreement, private?

Greg: yes, it's a letter from the AWHCP.

Willie: why sterilization included in our recommendation for WH&B population control, i.e. recommendation number 2?

Greg: it was included with the other methods currently being researched and pending approval. (Willie indicated he was okay with that inclusion).

David: drought: how has it affected them and their reproduction abilities?

Greg: It has affected more in terms of food and water. Horses coming down onto roads, looking for more forage, water. Has not affected reproduction as much.

Debbie: BLM, is this letter actionable?

Ralph: Advocate group is helping on Pine Nut herds, which is, in turn, helping the relationship between BLM/advocate groups.

Greg: we may be able to utilize this as a tool in other areas.

David: enforcement of LE regarding feeding and watering wild horses by the public.

Greg: need proof, not enough manpower to enforce this.

Debbie: let's wait until Tim Dufferena gets here to finish this discussion of the letter. Also, folks can read at lunch if needed. We can make a motion afterward.

**\*\*With Tim D.\*\***

Tim: #7 – voluntarily relinquishment of grazing permit to WHB. Don't like the idea of turning over AUMs to WHB.

Greg: reallocate forage in tandem with PZP. We don't have a population measure in place. It's a small step to use in management actions. It's not mandatory, it's optional to the permittee.

Tim: worried that it might add to the problem if I contribute AUMs to WHB, it would contribute to population growth.

Greg: we could add the words "population control" to the quote from AWHPC.

Ralph: this could be broken into two sections: the AWHPC's recommendation and the RAC's recommendation.

Tim: is this only applicable on HMA's?

Greg: it is on HMAs/HAs

Tim: I would feel better if the letter was referring to HMAs and sterile herds.

Greg: revised wording in the letter will go out by email for a vote.

- Concerning the final rewording of recommendation #7 (AUM to AML), Debbie advised the RAC that Greg and Tim would revise and agree on rewording for recommendation #7 and present the new version of the letter to Debbie for a RAC vote.

### **Discussion: Sage Grouse conference**

- Recommendation to the BLM that they have a conference/workshop

- Tools for Sage grouse conservation.  
Willie: the recommendation should go across the range.  
Debbie: there should be a model workshop that could work elsewhere.  
Robert: have these in communities, not just in one or two place where people have to travel a distance to get to.  
Debbie: involve the NE RAC.  
Doug: contractors navigate bureaucracy and writing documents.  
Tim: if the sage grouse is not listed will the BLM go ahead with EIS?  
Ralph: yes.  
Debbie: management framework is important, this will be in the EIS.  
Willie: work with Debbie and others to put together a more thorough recommendation for a Sage grouse workshop.

#### **DM Reports – Ralph, Carson District**

- Continue working on tribal relations
- Overview on fire season
- Building lease starting in October.  
\*Need: a map for land that BOR will relinquish back to BLM-CCD

#### **DM Report – Robert Towne, Winnemucca District**

- Review of Burning Man event
- Overview of District and major projects/events accomplished.
- Fire season stats
- Update on staff status on District

#### **Presentation by Raul Morales**

- Explanation of the Sage Grouse EIS ROD.
  - What it's for: consistency throughout all offices and programs.
  - What it will not do: close any programs down.
- An unprecedented Effort
  - 2 regions, 15 sub-regions (EISs), 98 LUPs being amended (BLM and FS).  
Robert: will the FS need to sign the plan?
- History
  - PHMA (Priority Habitat Management Area) and GHMA (General Habitat Management Area) have differences in resource direction/management.
  - Identified OHMA (Other Habitat Management Areas).
  - The State of Nevada's plan uses different nomenclature (Core, Priority, General).
  - SFAs (Sage brush Focal Areas) are identified as habitat strongholds by FWS.
- Key Elements

- Change land use allocations to limit or eliminate surface disturbance in priority habitats.
- Limit impacts of disturbance and require habitat restoration and improvement.
- Develop a more focused and effective strategy to address rangeland fire.
- Raul: FS will do their own plan.
- Willie: will there be significant differences between old maps and new maps?
- Raul: better maps, new information, better for nesting.
- Background for NV/NE California Effort
  - Respond to threats to GSG (2010 listing decision).
  - BLM lead agency, FS cooperating agency.
  - Draft EIS in Nov. 2013, FEIS in May 2015.
  - BLM and FS have separate Records of Decision.
  - 24 cooperating agencies.
- Key Elements of Plan
  - Veg management objectives to meet GSG habitat needs.
  - Description of desired habitat conditions
  - Identifies habitat – all kinds
  - Identifies SFAs
  - Identifies management actions for conservation of habitats.
  - Treatment objectives for restoration of habitat
  - Recognizes valid and existing rights, but identifies limitations.
- Program Allocation/Direction
  - Addresses direction for Lands and Realty actions, Renewable energy, Minerals, Travel Management, Grazing, WHB, Vegetation, Fire and Fuels.
- Screening criteria
  - Identifies a review process for determining appropriateness of authorizing the proposed project.
  - A project must result in a “Net Conservation Gain” to GSG habitat and be documented.
- Adaptive Management
  - The plan identifies soft and hard triggers for management actions.
  - Soft triggers result in additional project mitigation.
  - Hard triggers result in more conservative resource decisions.
  - David: we will want to see amendments in the future because of landscape changes.
- Mitigations
  - NV State Conservation plan established SETT (Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team), Nevada Conservation Credit System, MOU.
  - Mitigation strategy requires BLM to establish a WAFWA team within 90 days of the ROD signing.
  - WAFWA plan must be completed within a year of ROD signing.

- Monitoring
  - Methodology to monitor habitats
  - Evaluation of implementation and effectiveness of plans
  - Standards and intervals of monitoring
  - Monitoring at different scales

Discussion on presentation/Q&A-

Raul: amendments are about 5 years out.

Willie: in SFA's will someone lease oil/gas if they can't have surface occupancy?

Raul: if they can access without causing surface disturbance, but the bar will be high.

- Fires across Nevada. High success rate this year – 98%. But we have to continue to jump on them quickly.

Willie: what defines a hard trigger?

Raul: 1-year, 20% decline in leks is a hard trigger.

Willie: what about grazing/permits?

Raul: grazing is a privilege, not a right. Livestock grazing is not included in the 3% disturbance cap.

- Land conveyance and legislation trump the plan.
- BLM will not be disposing of any Core habitat.

### **Presentation by Joanna Wilson**

- Christmas tree fee proposal increase from \$5 per tree to \$10 per tree.
- All forests within the Intermountain Region charge \$10 per tag with the exception of 2 NFs and the Carson Ranger District within the HTF.
- The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) authorizes the forests to charge a fee for visitors wanting to cut down a Christmas tree. It is issued as a Special Recreation Permit.
- Public participation – news release, public notices, congressional outreach.
  - Results were mostly favorable, with one negative comment and one request from a Homeowner's Association for the Forest to put up "No Christmas Tree Cutting" signs around the private property section.
  - Questions:
 

Ralph: have the tribes been consulted on this? Cultural conflicts.

Willie: how was the decision made to make the entire \$5 go to National Treasury (NT)?

Joanna: The WO and OGC made this determination and Recreation lost the battle.

Willie: What would commercial costs be per tree?

Mandy (FS): An appraisal system is used, market price. We sell the volume, not the tree.

Pat: what if this is not approved?

Joanna: An example - According to Sawtooth N.F. they will not have a program this year. Per District there is a Decision Record whether to continue or not.

David: why couldn't people pay and print off their tags online?

Mandy (FS): they can't because of the program's design.

- Approval of fee proposal
  - Willie – 1<sup>st</sup> motion
  - David – 2<sup>nd</sup> motion
  - Approved by RAC

### **Presentation by Sandra Gregory**

- What is FIAT
- Organization of FIAT timeline
- Project planning areas (PPA) – 86 in total.
- Sage grouse habitat matrix – identifies the resilience to disturbance and the resistance to invasive annual grasses.
- FIAT process overview
  - Proposed treatments
  - Management strategies
  - Program area
- Examples of restoration projects – Desatoya Mountains Focal Habitat Restoration and Big Den project.
  - Activities and treatments planned in FY16 – FY20.
- Finding FIAT reports –[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov), search FIAT, Documents and Reports
- Using reports – instructions
- Establishing fire operations priorities – map and direction
- Identifying annual grass and conifer treatment areas
- FIAT assessment areas with acreage table
- Summary of all FIAT management strategies and potential treatments – increases local economic opportunities for contracting work.
- Next steps
  - Prioritization of Fire Management Areas (FMAs) was completed Summer, 2015.
  - Need to further prioritize the FIAT-identified 1<sup>st</sup> order priorities.
  - National Implementation Team – WO developing the prioritization process.

### **Discussion/Q&A-**

Willie: what is the 75% breeding density? Is the system flexible for fires/rehab?

Sandy: Under ES&R, 20 days to submit a report to the WO.

Willie: How will you implement the work/monitoring?

Sandy: ramp up resources across the state.

Willie: has much research gone into suppressing cheatgrass?

Sandy: combination of chemical and other treatments.

**Closing:**

Action items: add names to the last meeting's minutes.

Motion to adjourn – Willie

2<sup>nd</sup> – David

Approved